

Afro Banana Republic revisits its claim

The year is 12 A.R. (after revolution). Life as you know it has fused. Survivors - people like you and me - have been through thick and thin and endured mass-destruction. As a result people have leaped to a micro-scale revolution; a movement that eventually formed the Afro Banana Republic, a republic that reveals itself in a festival form which seeks refuge from generic sounds and embraces the realms of creative alternative art culture.

Scheduled to take place on September 8, the open-air Afro Banana Republic Festival is based on prototypes of European Community Festivals; large, non-corporate, music and arts annual festivals that usually rely on community members to work together in the planning and operation of festivals.

"We look at alternative art as art that is outside of the mainstream and traditional methods of production and distribution. We encourage art to be produced through collaborations of professionals from various fields, so that stagnated media is reinvented," says Martha Georgiou, co-organiser of the event.

In this case, the members of the Afro Banana Republic (ABR) consist of 15 freelance professional artists from an array of backgrounds who have been working together in a second attempt to endorse this Bananistas movement. Set in the Nicosia suburb of Ayia Trimithia, consideration has been imposed not only on the substance of the event but on its environment too. Georgiou defines this effort only to enhance the events' parallel voyage to popular culture: "Just like we wish people to immerse themselves in alternative music, we want people to immerse themselves in an alternative environment which contrasts stereotypical event venues."

Featuring DJs and live acts from Cyprus, Greece and Germany, highlights feature Swing Shoes from Athens, who are making an appearance in the Cyprus music scene for the first time and affirm that swing, jazz, gospel and traditional Greek beats can be incorporated into highly successful live performances, as well as Yoko Neco, originally from Japan and an active party organiser in Tokyo, Osaka, Chiba and Fukushima, who has, in recent few years, been regularly playing in bars in Berlin. She offers House and Tech-House beats, from which one clearly recognises funky elements in the groove, as well as the influence Berlin's dry minimal sounds has in her hypnotic



Yoko Neco

and melodic sounds that she has brought with her from Japan. This combination, along with her feminine sensibility, has established her as the new secret tip of Berlin's club scene.

These two features are just a thin slice of the remaining eight musical acts planned on the night and don't neglect some of the up-and-coming local musicians and producers such as the main organiser of ABR, Cotsios O Pikatillis, who combines organic and electronic sounds in a distinguished manner and has announced an attempt to perform a live DJ set for the first time.

Having established the festival's identity as far as the music is concerned at the ABR's first attempt last year, the participating artists seem to have grown, with other artistic interventions aside music.

"This year, other than music, we have collaborations with architects, graphic designers, film producers, photographers, fashion designers, set designers, event organisers, sculptors and chefs. As you can see we are not limited to music and look to collaborate with artists from all fields who maintain a high level of professionalism and quality throughout their work," says Martha when referring to the

visual and culinary arts of the festival.

If you consider that culture is a radical element to any form of society, or in this case republic, history is created via attempts to embed specific moments in time through specific personas that drive its peoples. El Presidente was introduced this year as the father of the ABR, an individual who stands out and hails great respect and admiration, apparently an ex-revolutionary, a man with a master plan, a man, that at first seems to be a supreme leader but once emerged in the festival's concept is seen as a mere person who has "created a safe haven for alternative artists wishing to collaborate and produce work that does not conform to the backdrop of banality and recycled, generic art and music that surrounds us."

Being part of Nicosia's bid for European Capital of Culture for 2017, the republic's vision is endorsed and aims to make this a three-day festival with three music stages, to place Cyprus on the creative map of Europe, by developing an internationally recognised, alternative, creative festival.

These are visionary elements of such an event, the brainstorming and of course the core values -hence participants - that make these events come alive. As coher-



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ent as this may be, being present and perhaps meeting El Presidente himself is an entirely different story, one that can only be told when it has been experienced live, on location, on September 8, 2012.

Info: Saturday September 8, 8pm till late. Entrance 10 euros. Ayioi Trimithias, Nicosia district. More info and the full line-up can be found on www.afrobananarepublic.com or call 96632030.



Teknon Brutus



Cotsios O Pikatillis